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MAO'S LAST HURRAH:  
THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST TENG HSIAO-PING

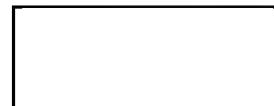
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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NOTE: The author is grateful for suggestions received from other CIA offices consulted during the preparation of this study, although no formal attempt at coordination was undertaken. Comments will be welcomed by the author on [redacted]

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This study concludes that the current campaign against Teng Hsiao-ping can be best understood as Mao's Last Hurrah, as a last desperate attempt to purge and rectify the Party leadership in order to make China safe for Maoism. This judgment is based not only on the evidence concerning the present campaign, but also on the record of political developments in China throughout the past decade -- in which the dominant theme has been Mao's obsessive, if futile, search for a revolutionary successor leadership.

The deep-seated fear that Soviet-style revisionism would triumph over his revolutionary doctrines in China impelled Mao a decade ago to initiate the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent series of rectification-purge campaigns directed against the Party. The campaign against Teng Hsiao-ping is the last that Mao will be able to manage and it too has failed to construct a Party leadership which shares Mao's revolutionary vision.

#### THE LEGACY OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The Cultural Revolution resulted in the creation of a political structure dominated by the Army. Faced with this new, more serious threat, Mao entrusted Chou En-lai with the task of rebuilding a civilian Party apparatus in which rehabilitated old Party cadres -- symbolized by Teng Hsiao-ping -- would play a leading role. The problem which Mao faced then, and continues to face today, was how to prevent these veteran Party cadres, having been restored to power, from returning to the old "revisionist" path they had followed before the Cultural Revolution.

The central charge now leveled against Teng -- that beginning in July 1975 and continuing through September he "stirred up a right deviationist wind to reverse correct verdicts" -- is two-fold in nature. It is not just that he deviated to the Right to overemphasize order and production at the expense of Mao's revolutionary doctrines. It is, more importantly, that

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he used the power granted him to criticize and attack Mao's Cultural Revolution programs and the young Leftist cadres who had emerged during the Cultural Revolution as Mao's revolutionary successors.

Although not precipitating the campaign against Teng, Chou En-lai's death on 8 January has profoundly affected the nature of the current leadership crisis in China. For Chou in death, as he never would have permitted in life, has served as the rallying-point for all those in China who are opposed to the current campaign as still another in the seemingly endless series of disruptive mass campaigns which Mao has deemed essential to achieve his revolutionary goals.

#### THE WEAKNESS OF THE LEFT

The anti-Teng campaign has demonstrated not so much the strength as the weakness of Mao's revolutionary supporters. Over the past decade, Mao has alienated in turn:

- most of the old Party cadres (in the Cultural Revolution),
- most of the military (in the anti-Lin Piao campaign), and
- most of the industrial work force (in the anti-Confucian campaign).

Those actively supporting Mao in the current campaign appear to be only the ideologues (who control the media); the worker-peasant-soldier students (who control the campuses); and the young Leftist cadres who emerged during the Cultural Revolution (and who do not control much of anything).

One indication of the weakness of Mao's Leftist supporters has been uncertainty as to how far to go in pressing charges against Teng Hsiao-ping. Another has been the prolonged and shifting discussion of whether to expand the target to include

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others in the Chinese leadership charged with aiding and abetting Teng. The most striking indication, however, was the demonstration at Tienanmen Square in Peking in early April, the first mass demonstration in China directed against Mao's leadership.

PROSPECTS: SHORT TERM

The end result of Mao's decade-long search for revolutionary successors has been, as explained in a recent statement by Mao, to create a leadership in China divided into "Left, Neutral and Right factions." Despite its factional character, however, there appear to be centripetal forces at work to re-establish an equilibrium in China's leadership now that Mao, as a unifying force, is rapidly fading from the scene. Although untested and lacking a strong power base of his own, Hua Kuo-feng, as the heir-apparent, is believed to occupy a Centrist position in the political spectrum and thus is probably acceptable (at least temporarily) as a "compromise" to both the Left and Right factions. These factions, moreover, appear to have a common interest in refraining from violence or instigating mass turmoil, since that would invite intervention by the Army and the threat which Lin Piao had posed earlier of military rule in China.

In the short term, then, the outlook probably is for a form of "collective" leadership, with both Leftist ideologues and Rightist administrators willing to compromise their differences in recognition of the urgent need to maintain stability.

It is too early to predict with any confidence the implications of this shift to a Centrist leadership for China's foreign and domestic policies. In foreign policy, the new leadership has declared emphatically that China's firm anti-Soviet posture will continue and at the same time has indicated that it may be adopting a somewhat harder line in China's relations with the West. This somewhat harder line has been suggested:

-- by the tone of recent statements by the Left-leaning Vice-Premier Chang Chun-chiao (who now appears to be playing a more important role in foreign policy) to Western statesmen;

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-- by the somewhat more assertive stance being adopted now vis-a-vis the Taiwan issue; and

-- by the decision to reduce trade with the West and thus restore a greater degree of autonomy in China's economic development.

The current campaign will almost certainly have adverse effects on China's domestic policies. To the extent that Mao's egalitarian educational reforms are revived and strengthened, it will mean slowing down the effort to raise academic standards and to improve the quality of science and technology in China. To the extent that Mao's egalitarian reforms in industry and agriculture are implemented, it will mean a decline in productivity and in industrial and agricultural output. And to the extent that the most basic of Mao's Cultural Revolution programs -- his concept of a three-way alliance of old, middle-aged and young cadres in the Party, government and military -- is revived, it will mean generating new factional tensions and, at least for the duration of the campaign, a loss of vigor and in some cases paralysis in the leadership of China's political institutions.

PROSPECTS: LONG TERM

The basic reason why the Left in China has grown progressively weaker is that the ideology of Mao Tse-tung, although successful in guiding the political and military struggles of China's revolution, has proven to be ill-suited to the more complicated task of modernizing the backward economy and traditional society of China. The central question in the great debate between Mao and his opponents throughout the past 25 years in China has been whether it is possible, as the Maoists maintain, to promote Mao's revolutionary programs and at the same time achieve unity and stability and the modernization of China's economy. The answer has become increasingly clear to those charged with administering the Party, government and military in China -- and that answer is No.

In the long term, then, it seems to be just a matter of time until the combined forces of the Center and Right triumph

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over a Leftist faction badly crippled by the loss of Mao. It is far too early to predict how long this process will take or what form the new leadership will assume. It is possible, however, by extrapolating from the charges leveled against Mao's "revisionist" opponents throughout the past two decades, to sketch in broad outline the likely effect that such a Center-Rightist leadership would have on China's foreign and domestic policy.

The foreign policy of this "revisionist" leadership would be defined less in terms of promoting revolution at home and abroad and more in terms of promoting China's national interests. Toward the Soviet Union, this would probably lead to a reduction of tensions along the border and an overall reduction of Peking's hostility toward Moscow. Toward the United States and the West, this could very well mean reviving the policy for which Teng is currently being attacked -- namely, accelerating the export of such Chinese natural resources as coal and oil in order to purchase foreign equipment and technology and thus speed up the rate of China's economic development.

Domestically, since this "revisionist" leadership would be much more interested in transforming China into a modern, strong socialist state than in fulfilling Mao's revolutionary goals, this would mean abandoning Mao's mass campaign approach to problems of national development, with its corollary of political turmoil and economic disruption. It would mean recognizing and acting to fulfill the need:

- to accelerate China's scientific research and technological development;
- to train highly-skilled working and managerial classes to run and control an increasingly complicated society; and
- to provide material incentives in order to increase productivity in industry and agriculture.

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It would mean, in short, the adoption of a series of more moderate and pragmatic domestic policies designed to stabilize the political structure and modernize the economy, the net effect of which would be (in Mao's eyes) to signify the triumph of "revisionism" over Maoism in China.

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